

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SCA-01 SCS-03 DHA-02 OPR-02 COME-00 PER-01
A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 AID-05 PC-01 MCT-01 IO-13 /092 W
-----190918Z 069827 /23

R 182045Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4341

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAN SALVADOR 2337

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, ES, PINS

SUBJECT: TRAVEL OF U.S. CITIZENS TO EL SALVADOR

1. SECURITY SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR HAS DETERIORATED
MARKEDLY SINCE FEBRUARY 20 ELECTION. BEGINNING WITH POST-
ELECTION DEMONSTRATION BY OPPOSITION AND IMPOSITION OF STATE
OF SIEGE BY GOES (SAN SALVADOR 0937), SEVERAL SERIOUS INCIDENTS
HAVE OCCURRED, INCLUDING VIOLENT DISPERSION OF DEMONSTRATORS
BY SECURITY FORCES ON FEBRUARY 28; FOLLOWING DAY'S CONFRONTATIONS
OF TROOPS AND CITIZENS LEADING TO DEATHS OF UP TO 100 CIVILIANS
(SAN SALVADOR 1013); EXPULSION OF U.S. CITIZEN PRIESTS
(SAN SALVADOR 1046); DETENTIONS, DISAPPEARANCES AND OTHER
HARRASSMENTS OF OPPOSITION (SAN SALVADOR 1206); MURDER OF
SALVADORAN PRIEST (SAN SALVADOR 1234); AND MOST RECENTLY
KIDNAPPING AND MURDER OF FOREIGN MINISTER (SAN SALVADOR 2193).
SECURITY FORCES ARE NOW IN CONSTANT STATE OF ALERT AND VIGOROUS
ACTION AGAINST TERRORISTS HAS BEEN PROMISED. U.S. CITIZENS
HAVE NOT THUS FAR BEEN TARGETS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS, BUT
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NERVOUSNESS ON PART OF SECURITY FORCES (WHICH UNDER-TRAINED,
UNDER-EDUCATED, BUT OVER-ARMED) AND CURRENT LEVEL OF TENSION
IN WAKE OF MURDER OF FOREIGN MINISTER MAY POSE PROBLEMS FOR
U.S. CITIZENS VISITING EL SALVADOR, INCLUDING THEIR BEING STOPPED
AT CHECKPOINTS, PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING CERTAIN AREAS, SUBJECTED
TO APPARENTLY UNWARRANTED PERSONAL AND VEHICLE SEARCHES, POSSIBLY
BEING UNJUSTLY ARRESTED AND THEN HAVING THEIR RIGHTS UNDER

THE VIENNA CONVENTION ON CONSULAR RELATIONS VIOLATED (SAN SALVADOR 1371).

2. EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ADVISING TOURISTS AGAINST VISITING EL SALVADOR IS WARRANTED AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT U.S. CITIZENS WHO INQUIRE CONCERNING TRAVEL TO EL SALVADOR SHOULD BE ADVISED ALONG FOLLOWING LINES:

(A) EL SALVADOR HAS BEEN UNDER STATE OF SIEGE SINCE SHORTLY AFTER THE ELECTIONS OF FEBRUARY 20. SINCE THAT TIME THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES AND DEMONSTRATORS WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEATHS OF A NUMBER OF PERSONS. TWO AMERICAN PRIESTS WERE EXPELLED FROM EL SALVADOR AT ABOUT THAT TIME FOR ALLEGED SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES, AND ONE AMERICAN MISSIONARY WAS DETAINED INCOMMUNICADO FOR SEVERAL DAYS AFTER PHOTOGRAPHING SCENES DURING THE INCIDENT OF FEBRUARY 27-28. UNDER THE STATE OF SIEGE, CERTAIN GUARANTEES UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF EL SALVADOR HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED. PERSONS MAY BE STOPPED AND QUESTIONED BY POLICE EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE COMMITTED NO OFFENSE, PERSONAL AND VEHICLE SEARCHES MAY BE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT APPARENT REASON, AND PERSONS MAY BE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY WITHOUT HAVING COMMITTED SPECIFIC OFFENSES OR WITHOUT EXPLANATION AS TO WHAT THE PRECISE OFFENSE MIGHT BE. THE EMBASSY ADVISES ALL U.S. CITIZENS VISITING EL SALVADOR TO BE CAREFUL TO COMPLY WITH POLICE ORDERS, PARTICULARLY AT ROADBLOCKS OR WHEN STOPPED BY POLICE. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS ALL VISITORS OBTAIN PASSPORTS. PASSPORT OR OTHER IDENTITY DOCUMENT SHOULD BE CARRIED AT ALL TIMES AND PICTURES SHOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CLOSELY MATCH CURRENT APPEARANCE. VISITORS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THEIR VISA OR TOURIST CARD FOR EL SALVADOR REMAINS VALID. EXTENSIONS OF STAY BEYOND PERIOD INITIALLY GRANTED BY IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT PORT OF ENTRY SHOULD BE REQUESTED FROM THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE AT SAN SALVADOR BEFORE INITIAL AUTHORIZED PERIOD OF STAY HAS EXPIRED. IF DRIVING, CAR REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS AND PROOF THAT CAR WAS LEGALLY ENTERED INTO EL SALVADOR SHOULD BE CARRIED AT ALL TIMES.

(B) IN CASE OF DETENTION BY POLICE, NATIONAL GUARD, OR OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES, U.S. CITIZENS SHOULD TACTFULLY BUT FIRMLY INSIST UPON THEIR RIGHT TO CONTACT THE EMBASSY WITHOUT DELAY. THIS RIGHT IS SECURED BY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT AND CANNOT BE SUSPENDED BY STATE OF SIEGE. IF DENIED RIGHT TO CONTACT EMBASSY, DETAINED INDIVIDUAL SHOULD INSIST UPON SEEING SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT AND ASK HIM TO PERMIT IMMEDIATE CALL TO EMBASSY.

(C) UNDER SALVADORAN LAW, PERSONS ASSUMED TO BE AT FAULT IN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS MAY BE ARRESTED AND HELD UNTIL FINANCIAL

SETTLEMENT FOR PERSONAL INJURIES AND PROPERTY DAMAGE IS ARRANGED. EMBASSY STRONGLY ADVISES THAT ANYONE PLANNING TO DRIVE HIS OWN CAR TO AND IN EL SALVADOR VERIFY THAT HIS LIABILITY INSUREANCE IS VALID IN EL SALVADOR, AND HE SHOULD CARRY PROOF OF SUCH INSURANCE. THOSE PLANNING TO RENT CARS IN EL SALVADOR SHOULD CHECK CONTRACTS CAREFULLY TO INSURE THAT COLLISION AND LIABILITY INSURANCE OBTAINED THROUGH AUTO RENTAL COMPANIES IS VALID IF DRIVER OF RENTED CAR VIOLATES TRAFFIC LAWS AT TIME OF ACCIDENT.

(D) NO DEMONSTRATIONS OR CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN DEMONSTRATORS AND SECURITY FORCES HAVE YET TAKEN PLACE AT OR NEAR MAJOR TOURIST HOTELS OR AREAS NORMALLY VISITED BY TOURISTS. HOWEVER, TOURISTS PLANNING TO VISIT EL SALVADOR SHOULD BE GUIDED BY CIRCUMSTANCES AT TIME OF VISIT AND SHOULD BE CAREFUL TO AVOID AREAS WHERE DEMONSTRATIONS MIGHT THEN BE TAKING PLACE AS WELL AS AREAS WHERE SECURITY FORCES ARE CONGREGATED.

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3. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE PRESENT STATE OF JITTERS AND TIGHT SECURITY WILL NOT BE DISPELLED, IN FACT WILL MOST LIKELY INCREASE IN INTENSITY, BETWEEN NOW AND THE FIRST OF JULY (WHEN THE NEW PRESIDENT IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE OFFICE). WHILE THE GOES IS VITALLY INTERESTED IN PROMOTING TOURISM, ITS OVERRIDING TOP PRIORITY IS TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL SECURITY AND ELIMINATE ANY THREATS TO THE MOLINA-ROMERO TRANSITION OF POWER. THE EMBASSY WOULD RECOMMEND THAT, WHERE POSSIBLE, INTENDING VISITORS BE ADVISED OF THE PARTICULAR SENSITIVITY OF THE NEXT SIX WEEKS. HOW THE SITUATION WILL BE AFTER JULY 1 WILL DEPEND ON ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE NEW GOES, AS YET UNPREDICTABLE. FOR THIS REASON, INDIVIDUALS, AND ESPECIALLY GROUPS, PLANNING VISITS LATER IN THE YEAR WOULD BE WISE TO PROVIDE FOR CANCELLATION CLAUSES IN ANY CONTRACTS, PENDING LATER EVALUATION OF THE SITUATION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, CITIZEN PROTECTION, INSTRUCTIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE, TRAVEL CONTROLS, SECURITY CONTROLS, TOURISTS
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: N/A
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